

Effective Educators

The first step to ensuring effective educators is guarantee strong educator preparation programs. Participants particularly noted a need for more time in classrooms and with students before certification or completion of teacher education class work. Support is needed for preservice teachers from those already in the profession so they may learn from other's experience.

Once in the classroom and in order to improve, new teachers should be supported by a strong mentoring program as part of a dedicated support system. In addition, new teachers should be evaluated regularly to identify problems in their practice at the outset. New teachers should also be attracted from a diverse pool of candidates, not only to reflect the diversity of the student population but also to have the best and brightest attracted to education in Rhode Island.

Educators who are currently teaching should be evaluated on a consistent and fair basis using research based methods. Evaluation should be holistic and include all aspects of an educator's responsibilities including test scores, student rapport and professional development efforts. Student and parent feedback should be a significant part of evaluations. Many participants stated that seniority should not be a factor in educator pay or benefits and evaluations should be used instead.

Teachers who are identified by evaluations as struggling or need addition supports should receive multiple interventions. Current educators in particular mentioned use of veteran or board certified teachers as a resource or mentors for struggling educators. Mentors were referred to multiple times as a support for struggling or new teachers.

The existing and future educator candidate pool was also discussed. Monetary incentives as well as good facilities and quality supervisors could be used to attract quality candidates. The best and the brightest talent should become teachers in Rhode Island.

Labor unions were viewed by many as a barrier toward improving teacher quality. Specifically, many participants cited union opposition to merit pay and contractual inflexibility. As a counterpoint to such concerns, some participants warned against using the union as a scapegoat.